August 4, 2021

URGENT LETTER TO THE CALIFORNIA DELEGATION

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing to share the support of our organizations for increasing the pace and scale of ecologically based forest management, such as prescribed burning and thinning of surface and ladder fuels, in the national forests within California.

As our organizations have worked together to develop this letter, its relevance has been underscored by media coverage of the latest wave of large, high-severity wildfires that are burning across the West. Just by itself, the expansive Bootleg Fire north of us in Oregon covers 413,000 acres, while here in California, the Dixie, Tamarack, Beckwourth Complex, and Lava wildfires currently total another 454,000 acres.

Directly relevant to the incidence of exceptionally large, damaging wildfires, the West is currently experiencing another extreme drought. Drought stress and the risk of high-severity wildfires combine to pose a significant threat to national forest lands within California and across much of the West. Dry conditions exacerbate wildfire risk.

That threat was not created overnight. A century of past forest management actions – including the suppression of beneficial mixed-intensity wildfires – have resulted in forests that are often unnaturally dense, overstocked, and choked with surface and ladder fuels.

Congress is currently poised to authorize significant funding for the U.S. Forest Service and Department of the Interior to directly respond to the challenges of devastating wildfires, unhealthy watershed conditions, climate change impacts, and a host of threats to biodiversity on national forest lands. We support investment in science-based forest restoration (such as significant funding increases for vegetation management programs) as long as there are adequate prioritization sideboards and sufficient agency capacity to assure responsible

planning and implementation of forest projects. Our groups support ecologically based forest management to reduce the excessive build-up of forest fuels that often result in destructive wildfires that not only threaten rural forest communities, but that also can incinerate old growth forest groves, degrade critical wildlife habitat, and harm scenic and recreational values.

With this letter, our groups collectively share our desire for the Forest Service and other relevant federal agencies to rapidly increase the pace and scale of science-based forest treatments in order to move away from inadequate management that isn't solving the crisis. Specifically, we support funding and prioritization of forest restoration programs and activities such as those proposed in the 21st Century Conservation Corps Act.

Community and home hardening are critical for human safety, but those actions are only part of the solution. It is also critical to promote forest resilience and fuel reduction to restore the health, watershed values, carbon storage, and recreational or economic benefits of America's vast extent of national forest lands. Our groups collectively support implementing important forest treatment strategies such as reducing surface and ladder fuels from appropriate areas, science-based thinning of smaller trees (especially in close proximity to rural forest communities and infrastructure), and a greatly expanded use of prescribed fire to reduce a century of accumulated fuels and to restore ecological health.

We emphasize that forest management sideboards and compliance with environmental laws are essential so that ramped up forest treatments adequately protect large, old trees as well as wild roadless areas, critical wildlife habitat, and sensitive natural resource values. But with this letter, our conservation organizations publicly embrace the need for a significantly increased level of ecologically based forest restoration treatments in order to turn the corner to get federal forests back to a more resilient condition.

As Congress moves to authorize and fine-tune legislation to meet the President's vision of a Climate Conservation Corps and to meet Congressional goals to boost the economic recovery of rural forest communities, it is essential for all interests to find the middle ground. We believe that amidst the various points of contention, there is so much broadly shared agreement. We urge Congress and the Administration to focus on those shared objectives and to move past debates and roadblocks.

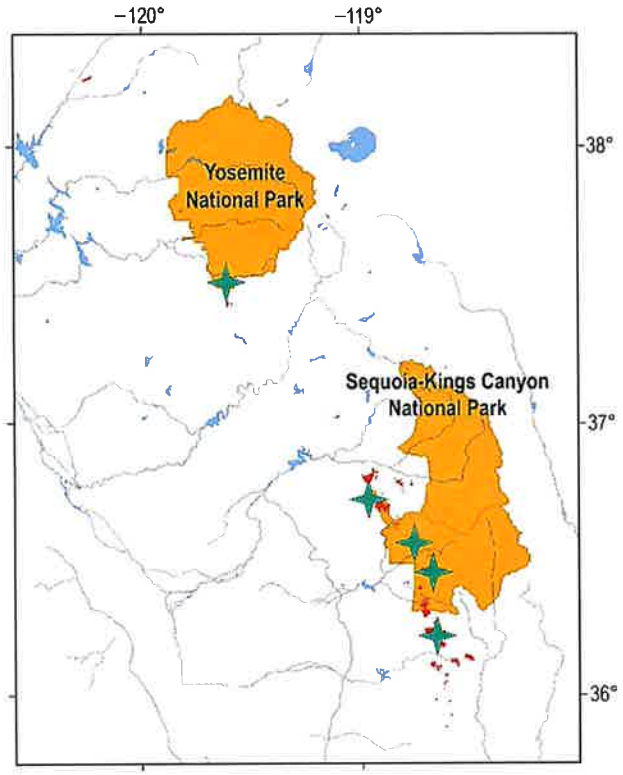
America's national forests are a legacy to be sustained in a healthy, vibrant condition for future generations. **We urge Congress to give the Forest Services the resources needed to take the strategic actions needed to achieve that vision.**

Defenders of Wildlife
The Nature Conservancy
Tuolumne River Trust
California Wilderness Coalition
Friends of the Inyo
Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center
Sierra Nevada Alliance
South Yuba River Citizens League
Foothill Conservancy
Sierra Forest Legacy
Sierra Business Council
Training and Watershed Center
Fire Restoration Group
California Native Plant Society
Pacific Forest Trust
American Rivers

Giant Sequoia Grove fire histories

Swetnam, T.W., C.H. Baisan, A.C. Caprio, R. Touchan, and P.M. Brown. 1992.
Tree-ring reconstruction of giant sequoia fire regimes.
Final report to Sequoia,Kings Canyon & Yosemite National Parks.
Cooperative Agreement No. DOI 8018-1-0002. 102 p.

For the 1000 year period from 800 - 1800, the five sites saw an average of 30.6 fires per century.



Century	Sample Depth	Fires per Century	Fire interval (years) MFI	STD	MIN	MAX
800	12	23	4.3	2.9	1	12
900	12	25	4.1	2.9	1	11
1000	15	28	3.6	2.3	1	9
1100	15	34	2.7	1.7	1	8
1200	15	39	2.8	2	1	10
1300	17	35	2.9	1.6	1	6
1400	17	31	2.9	1.7	1	8
1500	17	29	3.4	2.3	1	12
1600	17	31	3.2	2.2	1	12
1700	16	38	2.6	2	1	10
1800	10	15	4.6	2.4	1	10
1900	3	5	23	19.1	5	55
Mariposa Grove						

500	8	20	4.8	3.1	1	12
600	10	17	5.1	5.1	1	22
700	12	25	3.8	2.5	1	10
800	14	24	4	2.1	1	8
900	17	32	3.3	2.4	1	10
1000	18	42	2.5	2	1	8
1100	18	39	2.5	1.4	1	6
1200	18	41	2.5	1.7	1	9
1300	17	38	2.7	2	1	8
1400	17	35	2.9	1.7	1	7
1500	17	41	2.4	1.5	1	6
1600	17	51	1.8	0.9	1	4
1700	16	36	2.9	2.1	1	9
1800	14	20	4.3	4.4	1	21
Big Stump Grove						

800	10	22	4.6	4.3	1	19
900	12	35	2.8	2.2	1	9
1000	13	47	2.2	1.7	1	8
1100	14	34	2.9	2	1	7
1200	14	33	3	2.1	1	10
1300	15	24	3.8	2.8	1	12
1400	15	19	5.8	4.5	1	16
1500	15	26	3.6	3.1	1	16
1600	16	30	3.5	3.1	1	15
1700	15	33	3	1.8	1	9
1800	15	12	6.9	6.7	1	27
Atwell Grove						

Century	Sample Depth	Fires per Century	Fire interval (years) MFI	STD	MIN	MAX
300	11	18	5.7	5.1	1	19
400	12	28	3.3	2.5	1	11
500	13	18	5.8	4.9	1	21
600	15	20	5.2	4.7	1	19
700	16	20	5	3.9	1	16
800	15	22	4	3.6	1	14
900	15	34	3.3	2.6	1	13
1000	19	39	2.6	1.8	1	8
1100	18	34	2.8	2.3	1	9
1200	18	42	2.5	1.8	1	7
1300	18	26	3.9	3	1	10
1400	17	31	3.2	2.1	1	8
1500	17	16	6.2	5.3	1	18
1600	15	19	4.6	5	1	23
1700	11	12	8.6	6.6	1	18
1800	6	4	18.5	20.5	3	53
1900	2	2	56.5	14.5	42	71
Giant Forest						

-100	10	17	5.9	3.6	2	15
0	13	24	4.5	3.6	1	15
100	9	22	4.5	3.6	1	19
200	11	26	3.9	2.5	1	13
300	14	25	4.1	2.1	1	8
400	14	26	3.8	2.7	1	12
500	12	28	3.5	1.8	1	8
600	15	29	3.5	1.5	1	6
700	13	24	4.1	2.6	1	10
800	15	25	4	2.8	1	10
900	15	26	3.9	2.8	1	11
1000	15	29	3.5	2.1	1	10
1100	15	34	2.9	2	1	10
1200	15	27	3.7	2.5	1	10
1300	14	25	4.1	3.1	1	13
1400	16	31	3.2	1.9	1	8
1500	16	27	3.6	2.1	1	8
1600	15	22	4.4	2.1	1	9
1700	12	14	7.6	5.4	1	18
1800	8	19	4.8	3.2	1	12
1900	2	2	9.5	1.5	1	11
Mountain Home Grove						